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ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates how Taiwanese English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) college teachers and students collaborate and negotiate to design various learner-centered activities based on the Chinese film, "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon." These activities are intended to enhance students' listening and speaking abilities. The paper demonstrates eight classroom activities, including the following: repeated viewing with various subtitles, viewing with reversed subtitles, viewing with commentary, an interview with actor Michelle Yeoh (who is not a native speaker of English but speaks quite well), sequencing, interior monologue, a translation competition game, and theme song singing. The paper demonstrates how a Chinese film in the DVD format can be a highly motivating teaching material for Chinese ESL college students. It also highlights how students' learning motivation and effectiveness can be significantly enhanced if they participate in the process of selecting materials and designing activities. The paper discusses both the technical utilization of DVD and guidelines for implementing the learner-centered approach for each activity, focusing on teacher and student roles. Three appendixes present English learning activities. (Contains 11 references.) (SM)

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Learner-centered Activities from the DVD-format *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

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Abstract

This workshop demonstrates how both teacher and students cooperate and negotiate to design various learner-centered activities based on the Chinese film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* to enhance students' listening and speaking abilities. The eight classroom activities to be demonstrated are: 1.) repeated viewing with various subtitles, 2.) viewing with reversed subtitles, 3.) viewing with commentary, 4.) an interview with Michelle Yeoh, 5.) sequencing, 6.) interior monologue, 7.) translation competition game, 8.) theme-song singing. The practical goals of this workshop are to demonstrate: first, how a Chinese film in the format of DVD can be adopted as highly motivating and effective teaching materials for the Chinese university students, and second, how students' learning motivation and effectiveness can be doubly enhanced if they participate in the process of selecting materials and designing activities. To be discussed in each activity are both the technical utilization of DVD and the guidelines of implementing the leaner-centered approach as regards teacher and student roles.

Introduction

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon has been drawing tremendous attention and applause from the international film audience and commentary. Director Ang Lee blends magical, mystical and romantic elements in this Asian martial-arts film to create a strikingly beautiful world of elaborate costumes and picturesque vistas. This film has won four Oscar Academy awards, including Best Foreign Language Film, Best Art Direction, Best Cinematography and Best Original Score. Ang Lee was selected as one of the best directors by the ***Times*** magazine in June, 2001. Surprisingly, the discussion of this film also appeared in the 2001 Joint College Entrance Examination.

But all the enthusiasm and popularity about this film centered on the entertainment field only. So far, very few articles or literature were about how one Chinese-originated film can also be used in the EFL classroom effectively and efficiently. Most literature is about how to make use of the English-speaking movies to enhance students' listening and speaking skills. There were four reasons why the author tried to use this film. First, some of her students who have seen this film

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expressed that they were quite curious about how some Chinese expressions or terms could be expressed in English. Second, according to the author's classroom experiences, most Chinese students, when trying to express their ideas in English, tend to first think in Chinese, translate into English, and then express in English. But, sometimes it is hard for them to get the right expressions in English to cover what they want to say. After all, they think and speak in Chinese in their daily lives, so it is sometimes difficult for them to get the right expressions in the certain context. Third, since this film's DVD format is equipped with various subtitles, and dubbed in both English and Chinese. This format facilitates the use of both subtitles and both dubbing, especially Chinese dubbing with English subtitles. Fourth, since most students have seen this film in its original Chinese-language version, some even more than once, they were quite familiar with the plot. It was assumed that it would be more applicable and beneficial to involve them into selecting the materials and designing activities with the teacher.

The reason why she involved students into the process of the learning was that her previous experiences with the film-based instruction, she found out that students could maximize their language acquisition through more involved in the selection of the learning content and design of various learning activities in the whole process. The cooperative and negotiating interaction about the teaching materials and learning activities not only can encourage learners take more responsibility on their own learning progress and result, but also cultivate their life-long skills for learning autonomy .

In the end of spring semester, 2001, after students have been exposed to almost 25 weeks of film-based teaching and the training for the learner-centered approach, her students grouped themselves into eight groups and each was responsible for one activity for this film activities.

The next section will first briefly describe the plot of this movie. Then the description of eight activities will be presented.

The Plot of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

This film is based on a Chinese novel in which the marital arts hero Li Mu Bai (Chow, Yun Fat) is ready to move on to a life of meditation and a long delayed personal life with his long time close female friend Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh). He retires his 400-year-old sword to the care of another friend, when the sword is stolen by Jen (Zhang Ziyi), the cunning daughter of an imperial governor. The young woman bears a mantle of innocence that masks her training in the darkest of martial arts taught to her by Li Mu Bai's mortal enemy, the Jade Fox. Li Mu Bai and Yu Shu Lien join forces in their quest to recover the sword, lead the youthful Jen onto the path of

goodness, and destroy the evil Jade Fox.

The film differs from many of the popular Hong Kong martial arts films in that it shows characters who are engaged in trying to come to grips with their inner emotions. Li Mu Bai is unable to declare his love to Yu Shu Lien, and she has to hide the inner turmoil in her heart. The young aristocrat Jen is torn between having to be an obedient member of her social class, including an arranged marriage, and following her wild heart as it pines for the passionate arms of a secret lover. By film's conclusion, Li Mu Bai defeats Jade Fox in battle, but is mortally wounded by one of her poisoned darts. After his death, the sword is returned to its rightful caretaker and Jen literally dives into the heart of a mythic wish of fulfillment, leaving Yu Shu Lien to mourn her loss.

The DVD format of this film provides four languages of the dubbings—English, Mandarin, Thai, Cantonese, with four types of subtitles—English, Chinese, Korean, Thai. With the help of a DVD caption decoder, the Bilingual (English and Chinese) subtitles can be shown and the written scripts can be printed out.

Before letting students select the scenes and design the activities, the author gave a recommended list of ten activities which might be appropriate for them to design their own in-class exercises using this film. Each group chose their favorite one, or devised one of their own. After one week they all brought their proposals to the teacher. The following eight activities were designed and presented in the class by the students with the aid of the teacher.

1. Repeated Viewing with Various Subtitling

In order to lower students' anxiety for the rapid spoken dialogues, fully understand the plot, concentrate on the spoken dialogue, and challenge students listening comprehension, the repeated viewing of a film excerpt was put into the exercise. Since students had exposure to this listening practice, one group decided to use the scene entitled "*Li Mu Bai*," with a dialogue between Li and Yu, as the clip for this activities.

Before showing the clip to the students, the group asked their classmates some questions, such as " Have you seen this movie before?" " What do you think this movie?" "When you see your lover, how would you greet him/her?" "How would say 'Bee Kuang', 'Zu Den' in English?" as the pre-viewing activities. Few students had not seen this movie before, therefore, the group gave only a very brief introduction of the plot. When the group asked about how students would greet their lovers, various answers were brought out as "I would give her a hug," " I would just say 'Hi' to him," "I would hold her hands," etc. Then, the first viewing with English dubbing and Chinese subtitles, then English dubbing with English subtitles, last English dubbing with no support of any subtitles were sequentially shown to them for enabling them to

gradually move their attention from simple plot understanding toward full aural comprehension.

The assigned group raised some questions about the plot or referred to some context expressions for the post-viewing activities, such as "What do you think of the way they greet each other after they haven't seen each other for a long time?" "Why did Li Mu Bai come to see Yu Shu Lien?", etc.

The activities were proceeding quite smoothly and interestingly, except the viewing with English dubbing and English subtitles, when the English subtitles provided did not match with the spoken dialogues, the subtitles were shorter than the actual interaction, and some of them only offered the primary meaning of the dialogues. Another point echoed by the students was that they used to listen to American English instead of British English. They found it difficult to understand British English, and it took them for a while to get used to the different accent. Nevertheless, in the survey most of them expressed that the gradual explosion to the different subtitles was a helpful design for them to enhance and challenge their listening comprehension.

2. Viewing with Reversed Subtitles

Some researchers (Danan, 1992, Chung & Chiao, 1999) indicated that film clip viewing with reversed subtitling (mother-tongue dialogue with English subtitles) had promising and beneficial effects on the viewers' listening comprehension, especially for he lower-intermediate students. Since this film was also dubbed in Chinese, the showing of the reversed subtitling can be done from this film, unlike many other DVD films without this function.

The assigned group first chose two film clips for this activity. After discussing with the teacher, they decided to use Scene 23 "*Sisterly Advice*," which was a conversation between Jen and Yu about the trouble that Jen had involving some warriors. The purposes of this activity aimed at both speaking and listening skills. The students watched this clip twice with Chinese dubbing and English subtitles. Then, the class was divided into two teams, each team coming up with some sentences in Chinese and asking another team to paraphrase in English. The teacher was the judge to monitor the score which each team got.

Another purpose of this viewing activity was to enhance students' referring of the context meaning for the dialogues in English. From the students' feedback survey, quite a lot of students appreciated this way of viewing and commented that "This way of viewing is more impressive and creative to us;" "It can help us to understand the different ways of expressing their ideas in English," "This activity results in better learning effects than either with closed caption or Chinese subtitles," "From the

transcription, I can pick up some vocabulary which I have never known how to translate them into English," and "I learn some terms about martial arts in English."

3. Viewing with Commentary

Since the DVD format of this film provides the special features; one of them is Ang Lee's (Director) commentary with the Writer James Schamus about the whole process and ideas of shooting this film while the film is proceeding. The purpose of this activity is for students to listen to more authentic dialogues. Since this activity was not so familiar for the author's students, so she recommended students to select the clip with less dialogue between the characters but with a lot of action or special effects. The author asked students which scenes would fit this purpose most. Some who have seen this movie recommended that the scenes as Scene 6 "*Sword Thief*" when Yu is chasing Jen up walls and across roofs, or Scene 24 "*Jen vs. Shu*" in which Yu and Jen have a big fight and Ang Lee is explaining what these weapons signify in Chinese martial arts, or Scene 25 "*Li vs. Jen*" when Li and Jen are doing their sword fighting in the bamboo forest on the invisible wires that make them fly. Ang Lee is talking about how they shoot this scene and how two characters thought about shooting this scene. After discussing among the group and with the teacher, they decided to use Scene 6 "*Sword Thief*" for this activity.

This clip lasts about four minutes and with a lot of famous traditional actions in the Chinese martial arts films, noted as "flying over the walls," "walking on the roofs," "Chin-Kun." The clip was shown for three times, the first time with Chinese subtitles, the second and the third one with not subtitles. Students commented in their questionnaire that the repeated viewing of the clip helped them to understand what the commentator said and later focused on the spoken dialogues.

In another class, the author tried to show this clip without first using any support of subtitles. A lot of students echoed that they could not understand what has been said and felt frustrated because of being unable to comprehend the rapid dialogue. Their anxiety was relieved with the third viewing in Chinese. But still a few students with better English proficiency lever did feel it was good for them to have some ambiguous ideas about what happened first, and later check their guesses at the third viewing.

The post-viewing activities were some questions raised by the assigned group about the content of this clip, such as "According to Ang Lee, how long did this scene shooting take them to finish it?" "How was this scene shot?" "What were the most difficult part for shooting this scene?" "Do you like this scene, why?"

4. An Interview with Michelle Yeoh

The DVD was also installed with the extra feature of having an authentic interview with Michelle Yeoh, who is not a native English speaker but with quite understandable English. The purpose of this activity was to let students have the chance to know more about the actor, and her emotion and feeling when she was acting her role in the film. In addition, it aims at letting students hear the English spoken by non-native speaker to see if they could better understand the dialogues.

The assigned group for this activity first discussed with the teacher and got some guidance for designing this activity. They first asked their classmates if they like Michelle Yeoh or not, and what films they have seen cast by Michelle Yeoh. Then, they provided some background about her.

The original interview was more than six minutes, they only cut the clip for about 3 minutes and showed it to the class for twice with no support of any subtitles. The post-viewing activity was that they brought up some short questions about the content of this clip, for example, "What's her feeling about acting in this film?" "How is her impression on Ang Lee's directing techniques?" "What's the most part of taking parting in this film shooting?" "What's her most unforgettable experience in acting in this film?", etc.

The students' feedback of this activity were: 1). Due to no support of any subtitles, it is kind of hard for them to understand the whole conversation; 2). Through the dialogues, they could understand Yeoh's characteristics and her global point of view, 3) Her imperfect accent but understandable English encouraged them to learn English in a different attitude and realized that the fluency is more important than the perfection of accent or the accuracy of grammar.

5. Sequencing

This activity was completely designed by the assigned group only with a little help on the machine operation from the teacher, for students did design it quite creatively. The clip is from scene 22 *"Invincible Sword Goddess"* in which Jen kicks up a tavern while fighting with a bunch of warriors and recites a poem when someone asks her who she is. The purposes of the activity were listening comprehension, oral composition, and discussion.

There are six sentences in this poem (see Appendix A), which are in poetic style. The assigned group developed a handout with six sentences and put them in random order and number. Before the viewing, the students were told that they were going to view a scene with a poem, and their task was to take particular notice of the order of events.

This film clip was shown with Chinese dubbing and without any support of

subtitles for twice. Students in groups discussed then they competed to write the right order of spoken sentences on the board. The first team to write the right order could get a prize. Since students could only view and hear the sentences in Chinese, they had to figure out how those sentences might be said in English. After the first team got the right answer, the sequence with English dubbing and English subtitles was played again for checking and reinforcement.

6. Interior Monologue

As Stempleski and Tomalin (1990) state that the sequence in which one character clearly has strong feelings or reactions but speaks little or no dialogue is quite effective for doing interior monologue to enhance students speaking skills. The last scene of this film, "Wudan Mountain" in which Jen jumps down the cliff, was selected for speaking practice. In this scene, she did not speak much, and she only said to her lover, "Do you still remember the story you told me about a man jumping from the cliff for looking for the cure for his mother?" Then she flew down to the cliff, accompanied by very expressive music. Although she did not say much, in her mind she must have had strong feelings and emotions. This clip is good for students to imagine what character is thinking and feeling at that moment. After viewing this clip twice, students wrote an interior monologue from his/her point of view. Then they discussed in groups, and later the representative from each group shared their group version of monologue with the classmates. This activity was suggested by the teacher, and the scene was selected by one of the groups.

Maybe this was the first time for students to practice this type of activity, and some tended to just talk about why Jen took that action. With guidance from the teacher, they started to write an interior monologue and share with other students.

7. Translation Competition Game

One group designed a translation competition game for students to guess how some English expressions might be translated into Chinese. They prepared a list of expressions in English (see Appendix B) from this film. Students were given 10 minutes to prepare for the competition. The purpose of this activity was to let students learn how to translate some English into Chinese. After 10 minutes, one group member from the teaching group read aloud some expressions in Chinese and asked students to find out the right expressions in English. Whoever got the answers could get a prize. So students were very enthusiastic about this activity. From this activity, students could develop their translation skills and be encouraged to speak in front of the class.

8. Theme-song Singing

The theme song for this film was sung by one of Taiwan's most famous singers, CoCo Lee. Even though the audience can not see her performance in the proceeding of the film, it is included as an extra feature of the DVD format.

One group volunteered to look for the lyrics (see Appendix C) and designed the activities. They played the DVD song the first time, then the lyrics were distributed to the students. Since the lyrics seemed a little difficult for the students to explain completely and clearly, the teacher's occasional help with the explanation was provided. The second time viewing was with no visual image, only with audio sound. Students were asked to follow the lyrics twice until they could almost pick up this song.

The assigned group prepared two gifts for any solo or group singing for encouraging their classmates to try singing this song. Some students did volunteer to perform at the front of the class. The singing brought a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere in the classroom, and for language acquisition.

Conclusion

Since this was the first time for the author to try this film in her college laboratory classroom through the teacher and students' cooperation and negotiation, it took more time for both the teacher and students than the previous teacher-directed film-based activities. In a more teacher-directed film-based classroom, the teacher could simply select the materials, set up the teaching objectives, and design the activities, and students could just follow how the teacher directed the activities.

But with the adoption of learner-centered principles, the teacher needed to spend extra hours to discuss with the students and instructed them some techniques. For the students, they needed to learn how to select the teaching materials and design the activities. Some students first seemed not so willing to try this new method for they thought that it would be quite troublesome for them to get involved in the learning process. Nevertheless, after the teacher's explanation and encouragement, they tried and realized that they became more aware of the whole learning process and more responsible through more active participation.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon is different from other Hollywood feature films; it is first produced in Chinese and only dubbed in English in the DVD format. The English subtitles do not fit with the English spoken dialogues; therefore, the first activity of viewing with various combinations of subtitles could not be conducted efficiently as with other films. Second, the effect the British English dubbing was not so good as expected and not familiar among the students, since most of them were

used to hear the American English.

Although there are some drawbacks for the above activities for this film, the use of this Chinese-originated film provides the different way of learning English for the Chinese students. With the familiarity with the first language and background information, this film has been proved to be quite appropriate and effective on enhancing students' listening comprehension skills, speaking skills and overall motivation in the EFL context. The adoption of learner-centered approach further got the learners more involved in the whole process of learning for achieving the learner autonomy.

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Appendix A

Please put the right order for the following sentences.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

(a) I am the desert dragon. I leave not trace.
(b) Armed with the incredible Green Destine.
(c) Tomorrow I'll kick over Wudan Mountain.
(d) Be you Li or southern Crane, lower your head and ask for mercy.
(e) Who am I? I am the Invincible Sword Goddess.
(f) Today I fly over Eu-mei.

The Chinese dialogues spoken in the film are as the following:

瀟洒人間一劍仙
青冥寶劍勝龍泉
任憑李俞江南鶴
都要求我憐
沙漠飛來一條龍
神來無影去無蹤
今日踏破峨眉頂
明日拔去武當鋒

Appendix B

The following expressions are from "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.*" Please take ten minutes to translate them into Chinese and later attend to a translation game.

1. All of it is simply a state of mind.
2. Just fight!
3. Real sharpness comes without effort.
4. Stop talking like a monk!
5. On guard!
6. No growth! Without assistance.
7. No action! Without reaction.
8. Now, give yourself up and find yourself again.
9. You need practice. I can teach you to fight with the Green Destiny, but first you must learn to hold it in stillness.
10. I left the training early.
11. You were enlightened?
12. He said you were practicing deep meditation.
13. I was surrounded by light. Time and space disappeared.
14. Instead, I was surrounded by an endless sorrow.
15. I heard a true master has arrived. I have come to seek a lesson.

Appendix C

A Love Before Time

Music composed by & Tan Dun

Lyrics by James Schamus

If the sky opened up for me, and the mountain disappeared,
If the seas ran dry, turned into dust and the sun refused to rise,
I would still find my way, by the light I see in your eyes.
The world I know fades away, but you stay.

As the earth reclaims its due, and the cycle starts anew,
We'll stay, always in the love that we have shared before time.

If the years take away every memory that I have,
I would still know the way that would lead me back to your side.
The North star may die,
But the light that I see in your eyes will burn there always.
Lit by the love we have shared before time.

When the forest turns to jade, and the stories that we've made,
Dissolve away, one shining light will still remain.

When we shed our earthly skin,
And when our real life begins,
There'll be no shame,
Just the love that we have made before time.

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